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August 24, 2021

425 Rep John Lewis Way N.  
Cordell Hull Bldg.  
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Senator Johnson, Representatives Casada, Ogles and Whitson,

We have heard that State leadership is discussing ways for school districts to battle the current COVID surge, including the potential of applying some portion of the tools available last year through Continuous Learning Plans (CLPs). We ask that you urge the Governor and the State Board of Education to immediately allow districts to resume their Continuous Learning Plans (CLPs) to address the current COVID surge.

Last year, both WCS and FSSD worked together with the goal of being on campus if at all possible. As part of our CLPs, when positive cases and attendance reached a point where we could not be on campus, we were able to quickly shift individual schools or even grade levels to remote instruction. We stayed on campus unless student and staff COVID numbers made it impossible.

This year, the rules have reverted to our not having that option of remote instruction through our CLPs; CLPs don't exist this year. Now, if attendance and staffing reach a point where we can't have school, we must use one of our stockpiled (inclement weather) days. COVID cases have greatly increased in Williamson County the past few weeks, and we're experiencing it, too. Last week, one of WCS' middle schools went over 33% student and 30% staffing absences. On Friday, August 20, WCS had to use one of its 10 stockpiled days for that school because we couldn't staff it. Our students could have received instruction had the CLP structure been in place. Instead, they received no instruction Friday because that tool was removed from our toolbox. Today, both WCS and FSSD have schools close to this crisis point that we saw last week with one school. This will happen again.

We've already learned that completely removing remote instruction as an option does students more harm than good. With positive cases growing, we anticipate that we will run out of inclement days at some of our schools even before the winter hits, and we need the days for their real purpose. We need this help now.

- Having students learning remotely when needed is more valuable than no instruction.
- If we run out of stockpiled days, we have an obligation to extend the school year into Spring or Summer break.
- A remote instruction day will be more productive than a Spring or Summer break day, with continuity of instruction from the previous day on campus and likely better attendance than a school year extended into the Summer.
- We have a track record of using this tool wisely.
- Last year, all teachers and students were given the technology needed to quickly transition to remote learning; we're ready to do it now to address immediate, temporary needs.

We succeeded last year. Based on TCAP data, both WCS and FSSD continued to be leaders in the State. Many of our schools even showed significant growth in the face of the pandemic. One of the reasons we succeeded was that we used this remote instruction tool only when we needed it. We need that tool back to continue our success this year.

Thank you for your continued support of WCS and the FSSD.

Sincerely,

Jason A. Golden  
Superintendent  
Williamson County Schools

David Snowden  
Interim Superintendent  
Franklin Special School District